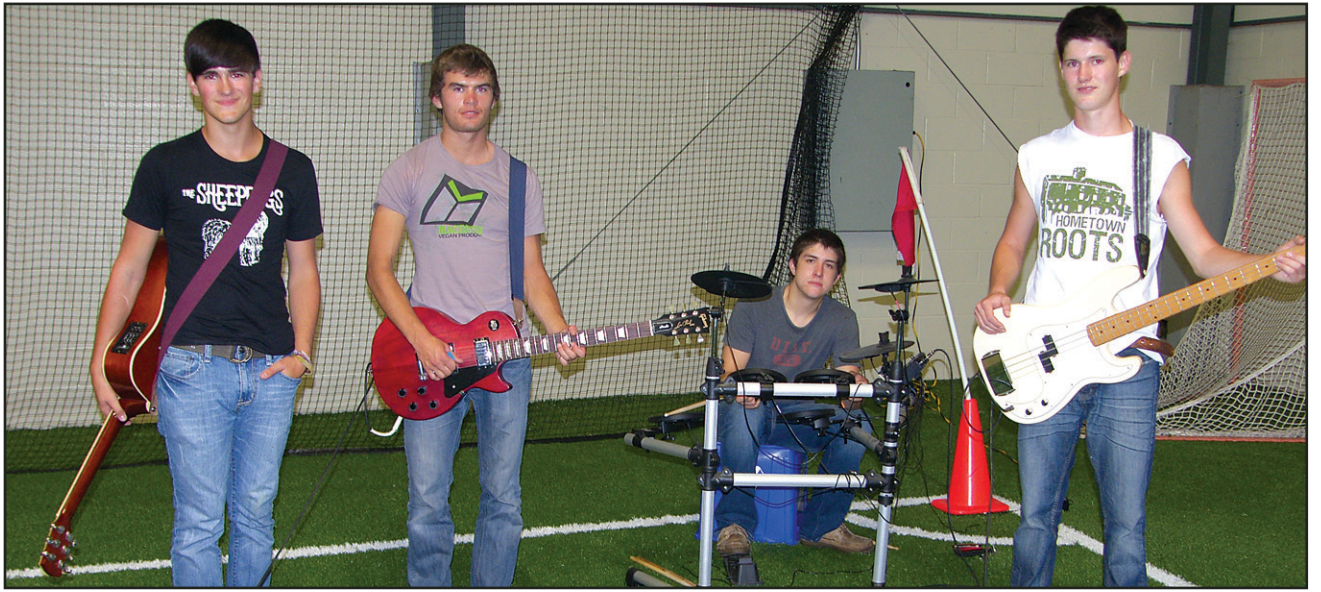




BLOOMS AWAY: Hibiscus blooms bigger than a dinner plate brightened the Acton garden of Joyce Carpenter this week. Although the beautiful blooms lasted just one day, there were at least 20 more buds ready to flower. – Submitted photo



BAND BATTLE: The band *Hortops* – Braeden Phelan, Gabe Potter, Branden Priebe and Cameron Phelan – will take the stage in the Dufferin Centre for the Acton Battle of the Bands on Saturday night at the Acton Fall Fair. Nine bands will be judged in the competition which runs from 8 to 10 p.m. The winner will receive \$300, second place \$200 and \$150 for third place. – Ted Tyler photo

Teacher salary freeze passes at Queen's Park

Bill 115, an Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector, was passed into law by the Ontario Legislature on Tuesday. Bill 115, which was introduced by Education Minister Laurel Broten, is intended to impose a two-year salary freeze on teachers in Ontario. It was passed with the support of the Liberal

and PC caucuses. "For months, the PC Caucus has been advocating for an across-the-board salary freeze for everyone in the government and the broader public sector, as a step towards getting their spending under control," said Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott. "We supported this bill because it does represent a step in that direction."

Ontario's deficit is projected to be approximately \$15-billion for the current fiscal year, on a spending plan of \$126-billion. This year, the province's net debt is expected to climb from \$237.6-billion to \$260.4-billion. This year alone, Ontario will pay \$10.6-billion in interest on the provincial debt. This represents the third highest expenditure

in the provincial budget, behind only health care and education spending. "I can understand why teachers are disappointed, because I respect them and appreciate the important work that they do. They are dedicated and caring professionals who have vital task of providing our children with the skills and knowledge that they will need," Arnott said. "However, the

reality is, after nine years of Liberal overspending and mismanagement, there is simply no money for pay raises this year." The Drummond Report, which was released in February, provided the Government with a roadmap for balancing the budget by 2018. In order to meet this target, it said that the Government must hold the line on education spending to a

1 per cent increase a year going forward. "As a province, the Provincial Government cannot keep spending money that it doesn't have and leave the bill for our children to pay," Arnott argued. "Unless they make a concerted effort to address the deficit and start living within their means, we will face a fiscal crisis at some point in the foreseeable future."

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